Sword and Sandal Sagas

# video

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The #1 Magazine of Home Video

APRIL 1985

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## Surround Sound
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VIDEOTESTS
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Canon Portable 8mm VCR
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April 1985

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# Random Access

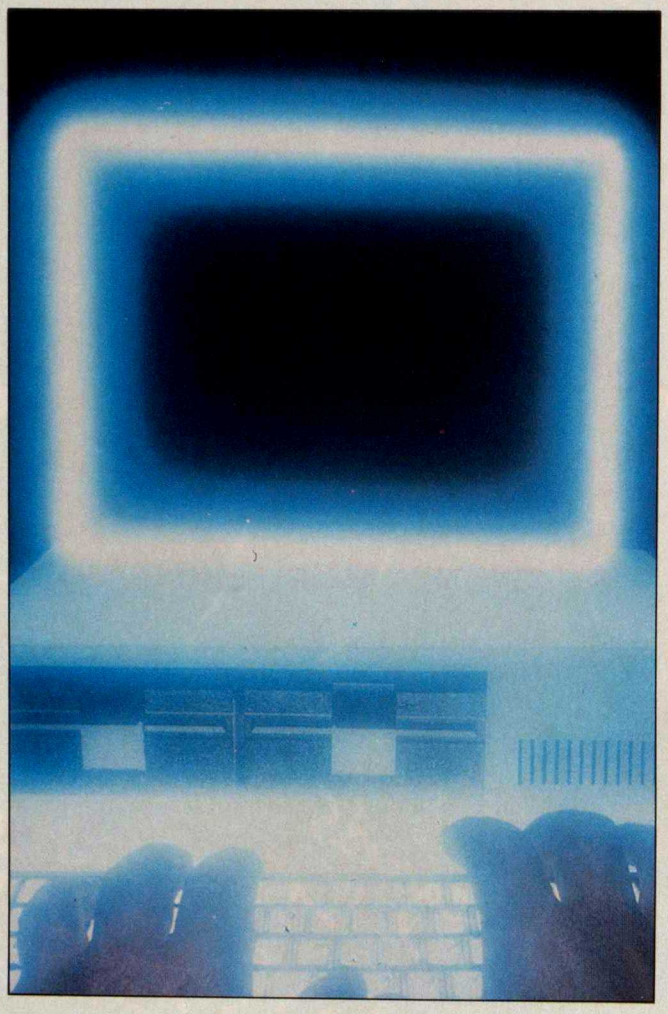
## Personal Computers, News, and Games

### Screen Protection

How dangerous are the low-level radiation and glare coming from your computer screen? The jury is still out on this one as the federal government's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) begins the first large-scale statistical study of computer-related health hazards. Scattered reports have been frightening—like the United Airlines survey showing miscarriage rates as high as 50 percent among female computer-terminal workers.

"Longterm exposure to low levels of radiation has not been proven dangerous, nor has it been proven safe," says Thomas Hartmann, president of Langley-St. Clair Instrumentation Systems. "All we're saying is that if there is a risk, you can do something to protect yourself." His was the first company to offer lead-impregnated plastic screen shields to block out radiation and glare from computer display screens. Using a special acrylic formula that can be manufactured only under strict environmental standards in Japan, the shields ($129, available from Langley-St. Clair, 132 W. 24 St., N.Y.C. 10011) come in three sizes, attaching with Velcro fasteners to the face of any monitor.

"We know there are three kinds of radiation emitted by cathode-ray tubes: X-ray, microwave, and ultraviolet light, plus positive ion, generated at the screen's surface. Ultraviolet is what causes your eyes to tear and hurt after a long session at a computer terminal," adds Hartmann. Despite being under investigation by the Federal Trade Commission for its beneficial



Don Carroll/The Image Bank

claims, a survey of purchasers indicated overwhelming satisfaction with the product—including 65 percent of the sampling indicating improvement with eye-fatigue problems. "Now companies like ACCO, the business-supply firm, are selling leaded plastic shields. Our competition is helping to establish the credibility of our product."

Screen glare is the most common complaint from computer users. A half-dozen firms have begun to offer their own solutions to the problem. The simplest is a nylon mesh stretched in front of the screen ("it works like a Venetian blind, letting through the light while cutting down on glare," Hartmann explains), sometimes with metalized or carbonized filaments to neutralize positive ions. Prices vary from $15 to $80. Polaroid takes a different tack with its Contrast Enhancement Filters ("like polarizing sunglasses," says Hartmann), made out of plastic (Model CP-50, $40) or laminated glass (CP-70, $100-$150).

Since most computer displays are either TVs or TV-like monitors, shouldn't videophiles also consider screen shields? "Not necessarily," says radiation whistle-blower Hartmann. "The farther away from the screen, the less radiation you're subjected to. Most people don't watch television or video monitors as close-up as they do with computer terminals."

—Steve Ditlea

### A Baseball Simulation

Micro League/*Atari, Apple computers/48K disk*

The wonder isn't that this program—which may become one of the more successful products in entertainment software history—was produced by a previously unknown company like Micro League; it isn't even the admirably high quality of the production. What's truly interesting about *Micro League Baseball* is that it wasn't done sooner.

Epyx looked like it was going to produce the first high-res stat-replay sports contest. But *The World's Greatest Baseball Game* is still a hybrid: half-action, half-stat-replay. *MLB* goes all the way, disdaining arcade trappings entirely to make use of its precious statistics (picked up in a deal with Major League Baseball) and recreate the managing experience as close as possible to the real thing. MLB offers players a level of statistical simulation unseen since *Computer Baseball* (SSI), and welds it to realistic graphics as good as those in *Star League Baseball* (Gamestar).

After selecting the teams from the game disk (more team disks will follow from Micro League on a regular basis) and determining which (if either) will be managed by the computer, coaches vote aye or nay on the DH and begin. The manager on offense has a nice command

Form **1040** Department of the Treasury—Internal Revenue Service **U.S. Individual Income Tax Return** **1984**

For the year January 1-December 31, 1984, or other tax year beginning

Use IRS label. Otherwise, please print or type.

Your first name and initial (if joint return, also give spouse's name and in

Present home address (Number and street, including

City, town

Presidential Election Ca

## Computer Tax Programs

As April 15th approaches we look for any possible assistance in the onerous task of income-tax preparation. A number of programs help eliminate some of the task's associated tedium and errors. Recently we have worked with two, *Tax Preparer* from HowardSoft and *J.K. Lasser's Your Income Tax* from Simon & Schuster. Both are beneficial, with some reservations.

The HowardSoft disk, available on the IBM-PC and compatibles (including 128K PCjr) and the Apple II series, is superior. Originally developed in 1979 for the Apple II, the program has improved with each version. It produces Form 1040 and 20 supporting forms and schedules. The user may prepare supporting lists or documentation for any line of any form or schedule. For example, you can prepare a supporting list of charitable contributions, enumerating all recipients. The total from this list is automatically calculated and posted to line 15 of Schedule A, added to line 18 of the same schedule, and carried through the remainder of the schedule and onto your 1040. This procedure gives you a complete audit trail and contains everything related to your return within the program's electronic files.

The *Tax Preparer* program is aimed at both individuals and professionals. It maintains records for many individuals. Program documentation is extensive and explains the various schedules and forms. Price is $295 (IBM) and $250 (Apple).

Far less expensive at $79.95, but a lot less comprehensive, is *Lasser*. Available only for the IBM-PC and compatibles (versions for Apple II, Apple Macintosh, and Commodore 64 have been announced for next year), it supplements the well-known manual of the same name, which is included with the package. It is easy to use and does an adequate job of preparing your 1040 and other federal forms. It does not, however, do individual support items. You must separately add up charitable contributions (the program has a calculator mode), for example, and enter the total on Schedule A, line 15. From that point calculations are automatic. This also means that the raw supporting data are not maintained within the computer records. The system is for individuals only. Still, *Lasser* is well worth the cost if you don't have a complex return. It simplifies preparation and eliminates all possibility of math errors.

Both programs also include "tax planning" modules aimed at helping you make business choices that will reduce your ongoing tax liability. These features are useful but are not the primary purpose of the programs.

If you use an accountant or prep service, these programs will eliminate much of the clerical work that these services perform. They won't replace the *analytical* work that an accountant does, however, though Lasser's book does help perform analysis.

—Barbara E. and John F. McMullen

of the on-screen action—dictating bunts, swing away, sac bunts, and hit and run—while the defensive coach selects pitches and infield set. The scoreboard in center field keeps a running account of the action (alas, no box score) with timely comments in baseball jargon.

The thrill here is not only in managing teams, but in the fact that these teams are comprised of real players whose exploits are known to the user. Replay great matchups of the past or enjoy the thrill of seeing, say, the '55 Dodgers going head-to-head with the '61 Yankees.

A football game is already in the works with other sports to follow. Micro League has broken some important ground.

—Bill Kunkel

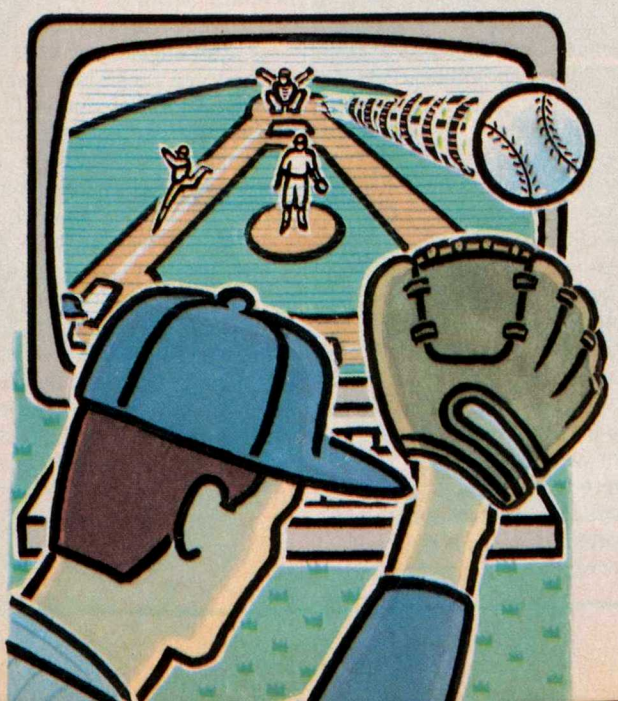


Illustration by Tim Grajek

## BEST SELLERS/HOME

1. **Dollars & $ense.** TIP, MAC, APc, IBM, AP. Monogram.
2. **Bank Street Writer.** AP, APc, IBM, C64, AT. Broderbund.
3. **Managing Your Money.** IBM. MECA.
4. **Homeword.** C64, AP, AT, IBM. Sierra On-Line.
5. **Music Works.** MAC. Hayden Software.
6. **Micro Cookbook.** APc, APe, IBM, AP. Virtual Combinatics.
7. **Mac the Knife II.** MAC. Miles Computing.
8. **Your Personal Net Worth.** AT, AP, IBM, C64. Scarborough.
9. **Paperclip Word Processor.** C64. Batteries Included.
10. **Bank Street Speller.** AP. Broderbund.

## BEST SELLERS/RECREATION

1. **Flight Simulator.** IBM. Microsoft.
2. **Flight Simulator II.** AT, C64, AP. Sublogic.
3. **Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.** C64, IBM, AP, MAC, AT. Infocom.
4. **Zork I.** CP/M, AP, DEC, IBM, AT, MAC, TIP. Infocom.
5. **Sargon III.** AP, C64, IBM, MAC. Hayden Software.
6. **Lode Runner.** AT, C64, IBM, AP, MAC. Broderbund.
7. **Wizardry.** IBM, AP. Sir-Tech Software.
8. **Ultima III.** AP, AT, IBM, C64. Origin Systems.
9. **Millionaire.** MAC, AP, C64, IBM, AT. Bluechip Software.
10. **Trivia Fever.** MAC, C64, AP, IBM. Professional Software.

LEGEND: AP = Apple, APc = Apple IIc, APe = Apple IIe, AT = Atari, C64 = Commodore 64, COM = Commodore Pet/CBM, CP/M = 5¼" and 8" formats, DEC = DEC Rainbow, EPS = Epson QX-10, IBM = IBM-PC, MAC = Apple Macintosh, PCjr = IBM PCjr, RIP = Texas Instruments Professional, TRS = TRS-80, VIC = Commodore Vic-20, VTR = Victor 9000, WNG = Wang Personal Computer, ZEN = Zenith 100.

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